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2015

University Studies Annual Assessment 2014-2015

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PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY
assessment report 2014 - 2015



University Studies gathers information on students' learning and experiences in University Studies courses in order to improve our practice and our students' outcomes. We use surveys, small group discussions, and review of student and course portfolios in our assessment efforts. The tools and methods used to assess student learning are faculty driven and developed. The information gathered is used by individual faculty, faculty teams, program levels and the program as a whole to gauge program effectiveness and inform program decisions.

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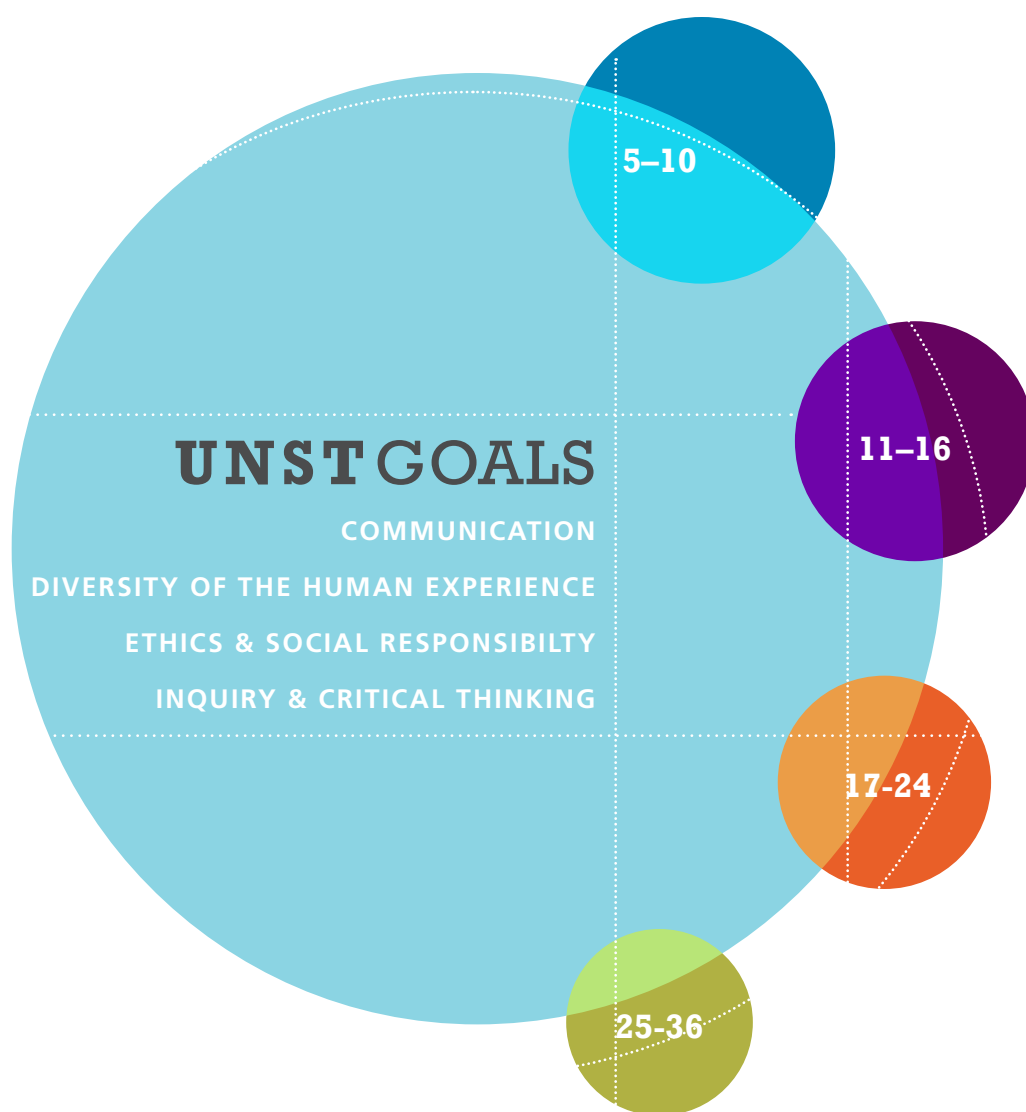
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INQUIRY

During the 14-15 academic year, University Studies (UNST) adopted a "Goal of the Year," communication. We introduced a new writing rubric, piloted the rubric and used it to review Freshman Inquiry (FRINQ) ePortfolios and Sophomore Inquiry (SINQ) writing samples. We investigated the usefulness of the rubric, the types of writing being asked of our students and how well our students' writing reflects our expectations for their learning. At the Capstone level, we expanded our course ePortfolio assessment approach to include intentional faculty conversations about how they address the goal of communication in their courses. We continue to be interested in understanding how Capstone faculty help students meet our learning goals.

At the FRINQ level, several new collaborations were initiated, most notably the establishment of the Exploratory Studies Program in cooperation with Advising & Career Services. In addition, new themes and structures for FRINQ have been piloted.

At the SINQ and Capstone levels of the program, we investigated student performance in online courses. We wanted to know whether students experience similar levels of success across modes of course delivery.

At the Capstone level, diversity was a continued focus and we worked with an outside diversity consultant to help support student learnings related to the appreciation of human diversity especially in our discipline-specific Capstones.

Across all levels of the program, we continue to use our course evaluations as a way to identify areas that need additional investigation.

INFORMATION

From student responses to UNST course evaluation surveys it is clear that UNST goals are being addressed at all levels of the program. All of the surveys asked students whether they had opportunities to engage in learning related to University Studies goals. Across all items, 75% or more FRINQ, SINQ and Capstone students agreed that they had opportunities to improve their learning and skill in their courses, remaining stable or increasing from last year. In FRINQ and SINQ, student ratings remained at a consistently high level.

Our pilot of the new writing rubric revealed that it worked well for our purposes and is a stronger reflection of our expectations for student writing. Review of student ePortfolios in FRINQ revealed that students generally met our expectations for their written work. At the SINQ level, while there were some strong examples of writing across a number of genres, students largely did not meet expectations. There are a number of methodological differences between the work samples reviewed and the method of collection of written work across FRINQ and SINQ, but there is also work that needs to be done related to writing instruction and support in SINQ courses.

The adapted Capstone course portfolio process was well received by faculty. They appreciated the collegial conversations, learning from each other, and the feedback they received from colleagues. Through the scoring part of the review process, we determined that all of the participating Capstones this year met our expectations related to communication and three were judged to be exemplary.

The comparison of face-to-face and online SINQs and Capstones showed that students in online courses have a lower pass rate than students in face-to-face courses. The gap was most pronounced for SINQ students.

ACTION

In 2015-16, FRINQ will focus on coordinating ePortfolio pilots within University Studies and convening faculty group to write a new Pebble Pad ePortfolio template assignment, coordinating three new FRINQ themes (by 2016-17), phasing out under performing themes, and redesigning the Freshmen Inquiry webpage.

Utilizing the Credit for Prior Learning process, the program will investigate creation of alternative pathway through FRINQ for returning/late-start students and providing upper division students who missed part of the FRINQ sequence alternatives to "going back" into the first-year experience, as well as articulating links among FRINQ themes and majors.

The SINQ part of the program will continue to focus on writing, including a focused discussion about student writing at the fall SINQ gathering, assignment design workshops, and improving the SINQ paper collection process.

Related to student success in online courses, we are exploring actions at the program, faculty and mentor levels. We have

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

piloted mentor outreach to students in online SINOQs this summer and will roll that out more broadly this fall. We are developing automated email communication which will help students understand our expectations of them in online courses.

The Capstone program will continue to focus on diversity in its discipline-specific Capstones. It will also focus on the student experience in online Capstones with a qualitative study of those students and continued work with the Faculty in Residence for online community-based learning.

The Capstone course portfolio process will incorporate faculty feedback and build in follow-up sessions to report out on and hear about shifts made to courses as a result of this process.

University Studies will continue to focus on one of the goals each year. Critical Thinking and Inquiry is the focus for 2015-16 and in preparation for 2016-17, the program will begin work to prepare for a focus on the goal of Quantitative Literacy.

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FRESHMAN INQUIRY ASSESSMENT

FOCUS OF THE YEAR

The Freshmen Year Experience (FYE) Report, published in late September 2014, informed Freshman Inquiry (FRINQ) program priorities, specifically in the areas of curriculum, and student and faculty experience.

- Three new themes/theme structures were piloted.
- The FRINQ program collaborated with a number of departments outside of University Studies (UNST) to streamline services for students (Library, SBA, Women's Resource Center).
- Annual faculty survey initiated regarding lack of student retention between fall and winter terms.
- The program began developing a Faculty Resource webpage, greatly expanded the number of faculty development opportunities throughout the year, and improved coordination of FRINQ faculty on-boarding and training.
- The program was a partner in the creation of an Exploratory Studies Program for undeclared students.

TOOLS AND METHODS

FRINQ End-of-Year Survey

Purpose: The FRINQ End-of-Year Survey asked students to rate their experiences in their FRINQ course. Students responded to questions about the course format, faculty pedagogical practices, and mentor contribution to the course. The results provide information to individual faculty about their course and to the program about students' overall experience in FRINQ.

Method: During the final three weeks of spring term 2015, FRINQ students completed the End-of-Year Survey. This online survey was administered during mentor sessions. 809 students responded to the survey, representing a 72.5% response rate. While this report contains information aggregated at the overall FRINQ level, end-of-year survey data are available at the theme and course level to help answer specific questions about curricular pilots.

FRINQ ePortfolio Review

Purpose: The FRINQ ePortfolio Review process scores student portfolios against rubrics developed to measure student learning related to UNST goals. The results provide information to faculty teams about student learning in FRINQ.

Method: During FRINQ courses, students develop portfolios representing their work and reflections relating to the four UNST goals. In spring 2015, students were asked for permission to evaluate their portfolios as part of program assessment for UNST. 257 student portfolios were randomly selected for review. This year, the portfolio review process focused on the Communication (Writing) goal, which was assessed using a newly developed 6-point writing rubric. Inter-rater agreement for the rubric was 81.3%. For more detail on the development and testing of the writing rubric, see the writing section of this report which begins on page 25.

FRINQ End-of-Year Survey

In general, students agreed that they had opportunities to address all four of the University Studies goals in their FRINQ courses. More than 75% of FRINQ students agreed or strongly agreed with all items related to UNST learning goals. Students' level of agreement related to Critical Thinking and Ethics and Social Responsibility has remained relatively stable over the last six years. In the last two academic years, students expressed stronger agreement that their courses addressed issues of diversity. Students expressed less agreement in the last two years that they developed oral and written communication skills.

Students also generally agreed with statements about their faculty members' teaching practices. Students were most likely to agree that faculty showed a personal interest in their learning, formed groups to facilitate learning, asked students to share ideas with others different from them and used a variety of methods to evaluate student progress (all above 80%). While that level of agreement is strong, it is somewhat lower than agreement levels over the last six years. Students were least likely to agree that their FRINQ faculty made it clear how topics fit into the course, presented course material clearly, or inspired them to achieve challenging goals (all lower than 70%).

FRINQ ePortfolio Review

79% of FRINQ students met program expectations for writing performance. The newly revised 6-point writing rubric was developed such that a 4 represents program expectations for student writing at the sophomore level. First-year students are expected to perform at a level 3. 38% (183) of FRINQ ePortfolios were rated at a level 3 or 3.5. 35% (73) were rated a 4 or 4.5. 6% (18) were rated at 5 or 5.5. The overall mean score for FRINQ ePortfolios was 3.38. Across the 10 FRINQ themes from which student portfolios were sampled, average writing rubric scores ranged from 3.0 to 3.73.

FRESHMAN INQUIRY ASSESSMENT

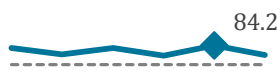
The Freshman Inquiry Learning Experience

Ratings made on a scale of 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree.

Percent of students who agreed or strongly agreed

◆ = highest percent

Apply course material to **improve critical thinking**.



2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015
1030 902 753 790 797 809

Acquire skills in **working with others** as a member of a team.



86.7 81.4 85.7 84.5 84.0 82.7

Explore issues of diversity such as race; class; gender; sexual orientation; ethnicity.



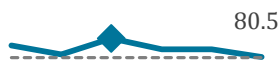
80.1 80.4 80.7 81.3 84.9 82.1

Develop my **speaking skills**.



77.3 75.9 79.0 78.2 74.2 73.7

Develop skills in **expressing myself in writing**.



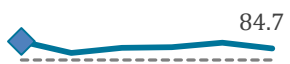
85.4 81.6 88.2 83.7 83.7 80.5

Learn how to **find and use resources** for answering or solving problems.



81.3 77.3 80.2 79.8 79.4 75.1

Learn how to **analyze and critically evaluate** ideas, arguments and multiple points of view.



87.7 82.8 85.0 85.4 87.3 84.7

Explore **ethical issues**.



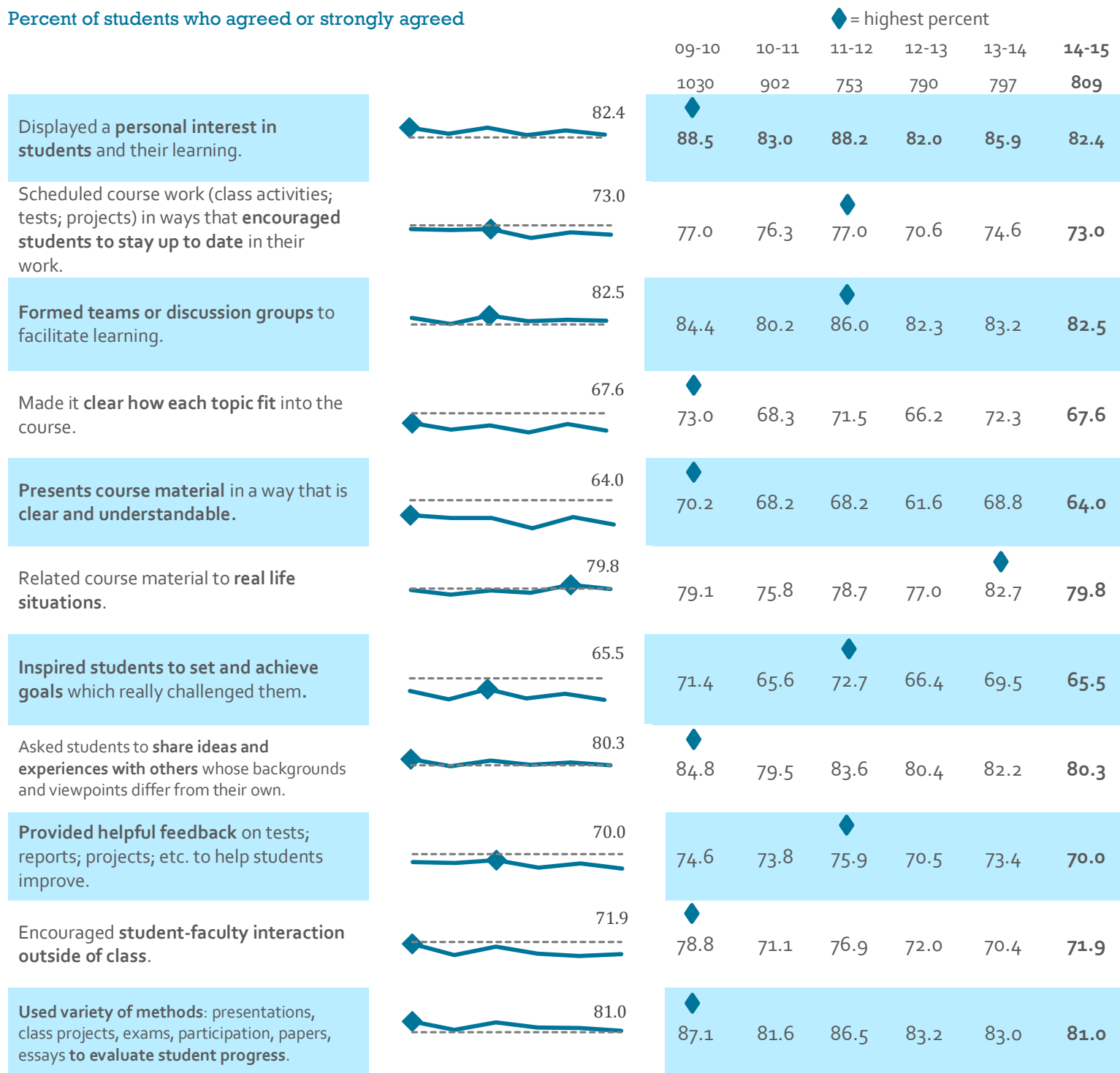
87.0 82.8 85.6 87.2 86.8 85.1

FRESHMAN INQUIRY ASSESSMENT

The Freshman Inquiry Faculty

Ratings made on a scale of 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree.

Percent of students who agreed or strongly agreed



FRESHMAN INQUIRY ASSESSMENT

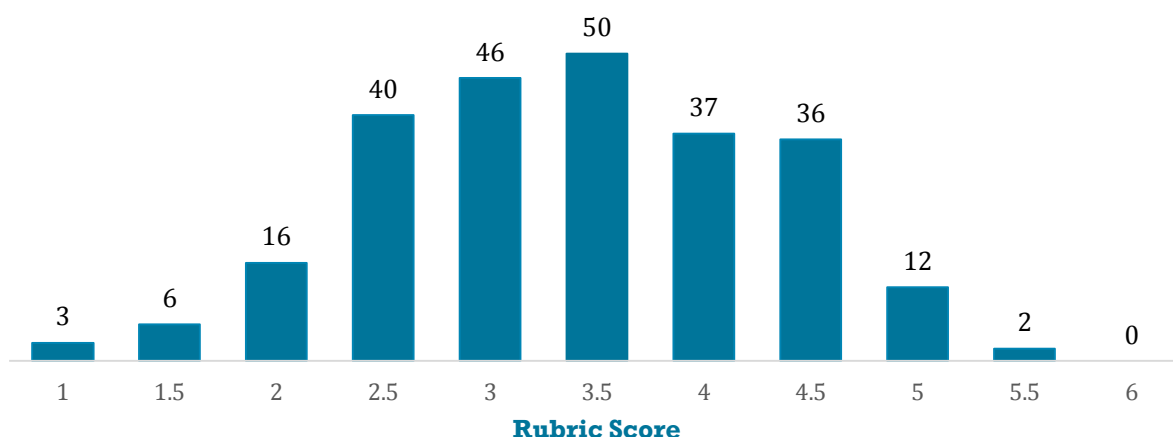
Distribution of FRINQ ePortfolio Scores

Mean writing rubric score: 3.38.

Percent of portfolios scoring above 3: 79

Percent of portfolios scoring above 4: 35.

2015 FRINQ Writing Scores



OTHER ACTIVITIES

The Freshmen Year Experience (FYE) Report has informed collaborations across campus. The library began to pilot and improve online research tutorials for FRINQ students. A partnership with Brenda Echelberger, School of Business, is creating content-related financial literacy modules for in-class use by faculty that will be available fall 2015. FRINQ faculty and mentors supported implementation of the SAFE Campus module in cooperation with the Women's Resource Center and the Office of Equity and Compliance. The program began work with Advising & Career Services to create curricular content for faculty use, including creation of the Exploratory Studies Program for undeclared students and the UNST Student Support Hub (programming to begin in fall 2015) to support the whole student.

To understand better why some students do not complete the FRINQ sequence, the program initiated an annual

faculty survey regarding students who were not retained between fall and winter terms and created a database to inform planning/programming.

To improve the faculty experience of those teaching in FRINQ, the program began developing a Faculty Resource webpage, greatly expanded the number of faculty development opportunities throughout the year, and improved coordination of FRINQ faculty on-boarding and training. For faculty seeking promotion and/or tenure, the program provides support letters for portfolios. To recognize and encourage the innovative work of FRINQ faculty, the program began a Scholarship of Teaching & Learning writing workshop series, secured faculty development funds for the creation of new FRINQ themes, systemized "FRINQ Sabbatical" for faculty, and implemented FRINQ Symposium Grants for faculty to conduct larger, campus-wide impact activities and community-based learning (e.g., speaker series).

REFLECTION

The consistently lower scores on the three variables of “made it clear how each topic fit into the course,” “presents course material in a way that is clear and understandable,” and “inspired students to set and achieve goals that really challenged them” indicate a disconnect between faculty and FRINQ students. This pattern will be shared with faculty and conversations will begin to identify strategies for addressing these variables.

The successful meeting of program writing expectations results from University Studies’ commitment to supporting FRINQ faculty and student writing through the position of a Writing Coordinator and her collaboration with, and training of, faculty.

The creation of the UNST Student Support Hub and the Exploratory Studies Program provides an opportunity to revisit the End-of-Year Survey and examine if there are variables to be added or modified.

ACTION STEPS

In 2015-16, the program will focus on coordinating ePortfolio pilots within University Studies and convening a faculty group to write a new Pebble Pad ePortfolio template assignment, coordinating three new FRINQ themes (by 2016-17), phasing out under-performing themes, and redesigning the Freshmen Inquiry webpage.

Utilizing the Credit for Prior Learning process, the program will investigate creation of an alternative pathway through Freshmen Inquiry for returning/late-start students and providing upper division students who missed part of the FRINQ sequence alternatives to “going back” into the first-year experience, as well as articulating links among Freshmen Inquiry themes and majors.

UNST will continue to focus on one of the goals each year. Critical Thinking and Inquiry is the focus for 2015-16 and in preparation for 2016-17, the program will prepare for a focus on the goal of Quantitative Literacy.

FRESHMAN INQUIRY ASSESSMENT

FRINQ

SOPHOMORE INQUIRY ASSESSMENT

FOCUS OF THE YEAR

During the 14-15 academic year, Sophomore Inquiry (SINQ) and Cluster assessment activities included a few areas of focus:

- The University Studies (UNST) goal of Communication (Writing). We collected student papers for review and added writing specific questions to the End-of-Term Survey.
- A focus on conversations among SINQ faculty about teaching practices, assessment data, and writing.
- Student performance in online SINQ courses.
- An ongoing conversation about Cluster course alignment.

TOOLS AND METHODS

SINQ End-of-Term Survey

Purpose: The SINQ End-of-Term Survey asked students to rate their experiences in their SINQ course. Students responded to questions about the course format, faculty pedagogical practices, and mentor contribution to the course. The results provide information to individual faculty about their course and to the program about students' overall experience in SINQ.

Method: During the final three weeks of each term during the 2014-2015 academic year, SINQ students completed the End-of-Term Survey. This online survey was administered during mentor sessions. 2905 students responded to the survey.

SINQ Paper Review

Purpose: The SINQ Paper Review process scored student work against a newly developed writing rubric. The results provide information to faculty teams and the program more generally about student writing in SINQ. We were also piloting a student work sample collection process because this has not been a routine practice at the SINQ level.

Method: This year, the review process focused on the Communication (Writing) goal, which was assessed using a newly developed 6-point writing rubric. Inter-rater agreement for the rubric was above 80%. For more details on the development and testing of the writing rubric, see the writing section of this report which begins on page 25.

During winter and spring terms of 2015, 142 student writing samples were collected from 35 SINQ faculty (out of 69). 13 out of 15 SINQ themes were represented in this sample, but it is a smaller sample than we would like to collect in the future. Also, there was variety in the sampling methods across courses. Some faculty provided a random sample of student work while others provided a sample of high, medium, and low scoring student work.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

SINQ End-of-Term Survey

In general, students agreed that they had the opportunities to address all four of the University Studies goals in their SINQ courses. More than 75% of SINQ students agreed or strongly agreed with all items related to UNST learning goals. Related to the UNST learning goal of Diversity, SINQ students showed the strongest level of agreement when compared with the last six years. Students showed the least agreement that they felt a sense of community with their classmates, that their course helped them improve oral communication, and that they understood how the course fit into their general education requirements.

Students also generally agreed with statements about their faculty members' teaching practices. All items had agreement rates at or above 75%. Students were most likely to agree that faculty created an atmosphere that encouraged active participation (80.1%). A number of items reached peak rates of agreement during last academic year (13-14). Across most items, students continued with consistently high rates of agreement or slight decreases. Students' overall satisfaction with SINQ courses has remained above 75% over the last 5 years.

SINQ Paper Review

With a 4 representing expectations for writing at a sophomore level, 39% of SINQ student writing samples reached the expectation. The mean score for SINQ student writing samples was 3.0. We found evidence of strong writing across SINQ themes and across genres (e.g., brochures, literary analysis, research papers), but overall the writing was not as strong as we expected. We believe that there were problems with our sampling methodology, so we cannot rely on this as a representative sample of student writing from across all SINQs. However, the results do inform our understanding of writing at the sophomore level of University Studies and point out that we need to focus on writing instruction in the next year.

SOPHOMORE INQUIRY ASSESSMENT

QNTS

The Sophomore Inquiry Learning Experience

Ratings made on a scale of 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree.

Percent of students who agreed or strongly agreed

◆ = highest percent

The course provided opportunities to learn to **analyze and critically evaluate** ideas, arguments and multiple points of view.



2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015
3332 3885 3406 2794 2650 2905

The course provided opportunities to develop skills in **working with others as a member of a team**.



76.5 77.3 76.5 80.1 77.6 74.9

The course provided opportunities to **explore issues of diversity** such as race; class; gender; sexual orientation; ethnicity.



77.4 77.7 77.1 78.5 77.5 80.6

The course provided opportunities to develop skills in **expressing myself orally**.



75.4 74.8 72.1 74.5 73.0 68.5

The course provided opportunities to develop skills in **expressing myself in writing**.



81.6 83.0 81.0 83.0 83.1 81.3

The course provided opportunities to **explore ethical issues and dilemmas**.



77.9 79.9 79.3 83.1 83.4 82.4

I **understand** how this course fits into my **PSU general education** requirements.



71.7 73.6 72.5 73.7 75.1 74.3

It was clear how the work from the **mentor session** connected to the **overall course**.



74.9 77.8 79.1 77.4 81.5 78.7

I felt a **sense of community** with my classmates in this course.



0.0 52.1 65.3 66.5 66.8 65.9

Overall, I was **satisfied with my experience** in this class.



72.7 75.7 72.9 75.6 76.9 76.1

SOPHOMORE INQUIRY ASSESSMENT

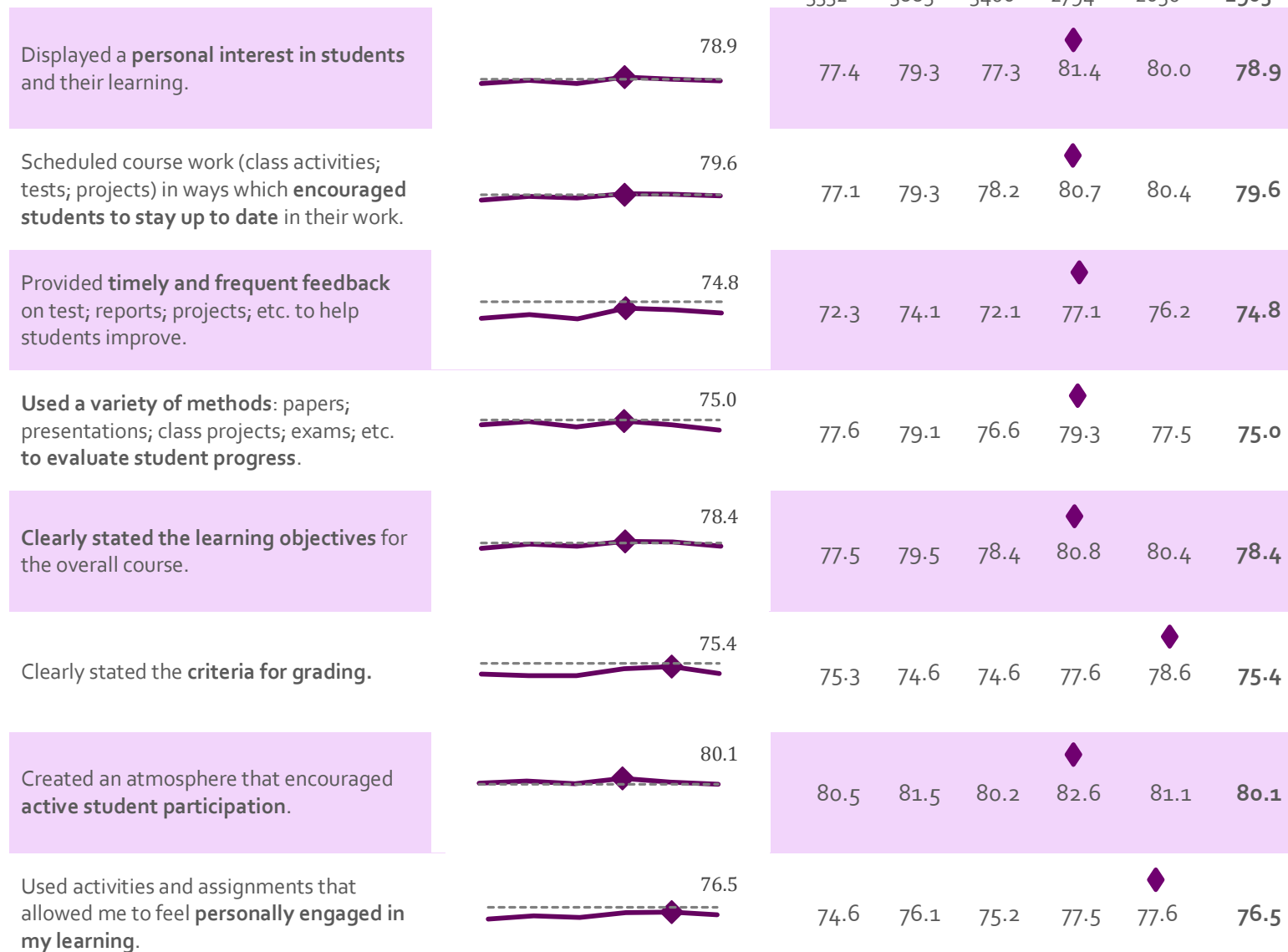
QNTS

The Sophomore Inquiry Faculty

Ratings made on a scale of 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree.

Percent of students who agreed or strongly agreed

◆ = highest percent



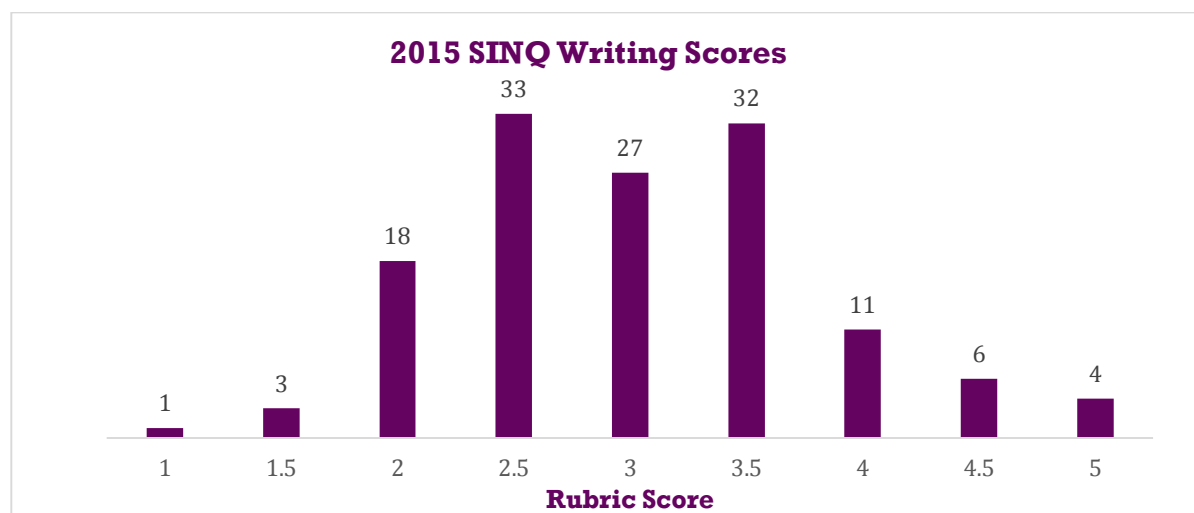
SOPHOMORE INQUIRY ASSESSMENT

SINQ Writing Review

Mean writing rubric score: 3.0.

Percent of portfolios scoring above 3: 39.2.

Percent of portfolios scoring above 2: 83.7.



REFLECTION

Overall, it was heartening to see student agreement that issues of diversity was addressed in their SINQ courses at the highest rate it has been in the last six years. Across many other classroom learning experience items, there remains a high level of agreement among students that SINQ courses are addressing UNST learning and pedagogical goals. Students indicated the lowest level of agreement with the item regarding improving their oral communication skills. It is possible that as the program has increased emphasis on written communication we have decreased emphasis on student presentations or other forms of oral communication.

Use of Assessment Data. A key focus this year was encouraging Cluster Coordinators and SINQ faculty to use assessment data and work together to identify strategies for improving SINQ courses. The beginning of year SINQ gathering was structured so that coordinators and faculty had time to discuss data and strategy for the year. Four coordinators continued to meet regularly with faculty groups and five met individually with faculty teaching the SINQ for which they are responsible. Through these meetings and connections, faculty have shared syllabi, assignments and teaching strategies for the SINQ course and in some cases reviewed student writing assignments. Over

the year, the Director of Assessment and Upper Division Clusters shared course evaluation data with coordinators and over the summer has shared the data that came out of the SINQ writing review. Coordinators reviewed the data for their SINQs and have identified strengths and areas for continued faculty discussion.

SINQ Writing Review. Although the SINQ writing sample was not random or representative of all SINQ students and courses, it does provide information about students' level of writing in SINQ. Importantly, we saw highly rated writing across a variety of genres (brochures, essays, blog posts, research papers). Overall however, the distribution of scores and the average score was disappointing and points out that a continued emphasis on writing in SINQ is needed. We recognize that this is the start of a more intensive conversation and effort at the sophomore level related to writing. We will attempt a more systematic collection of student papers in the upcoming year and we will work on identifying and providing examples of a variety of writing assignments that promote the type of learning and writing performance we are expecting at the sophomore level.

In responses from Cluster Coordinators, some expressed the challenge of trying to address writing in a 10-week interdisciplinary course. They point out that we need to acknowledge the challenges faculty face as they teach students with a broad range of writing experiences, abilities and

SOPHOMORE INQUIRY ASSESSMENT

backgrounds. The writing outcomes are meant to define the cumulative learning experience across Freshman Inquiry (FRINQ) and SINQ and are not expected to be accomplished in a single SINQ course. However, individual SINQ courses can improve their assignments and writing instruction in order to support the program goals. For example, some SINQs employ common rubrics or assignments which were developed before we had articulated our revised learning outcomes. At least two coordinators discussed aligning the rubrics and assignments with the revised outcomes as a way to more intentionally address writing instruction in SINQ.

Student Performance in Online Courses. After discovering that online SINQ courses have lower pass rates than face-to-face courses, we held a meeting with online faculty and discussed possible interventions. This summer, online mentors have piloted a program of outreach to individual students. We have just collected the response from that pilot and are crafting the next phase of efforts to improve student success. We anticipate that this will include more clarity up front about expectations in our online courses, direct outreach and support by online SINQ faculty and mentors and the incorporation of a variety of media, video, audio, etc.

ACTION STEPS

Based on the assessment data collected this year, conversations among faculty, and Cluster Coordinator feedback and insight, we propose several action steps for the next year.

Use of Assessment Data:

- Convene a fall SINQ gathering, a part of which will specifically focus on looking at assessment data and evidence of student writing.
- Encourage coordinators to continue to discuss results with faculty with a goal that more coordinators are hosting discussions with faculty about SINQ courses.
- As suggested by one Coordinator, provide new SINQ faculty with a copy of our End-of-Term Survey along with our rubrics to help them better understand program expectations for teaching in SINQs.

SINQ Writing:

- Focused discussion about student writing at fall SINQ gathering.

- Collaborate with UNST Writing Coordinator to offer assignment design workshops.
- Offer support to faculty and coordinators to adapt UNST writing rubric for use in specific SINQs.
- Improve SINQ paper collection process to get a more representative sample of SINQ papers for review next year.
- Several coordinators are going to have targeted discussions with faculty about the kinds of writing produced in SINQs.

Student Success in Online SINQs:

- Explore an automatic drop policy for students who do not “attend” during the first week of class.
- Implement a pre-term email to all students enrolled in UNST online courses which outlines expectations for our online courses.
- Refine and roll out online mentor outreach plan for SINQ students.
- Continue to work on improving the student response rate to course evaluations in online courses.

Cluster Course Alignment:

- Collaborate with coordinators to survey cluster course faculty about course alignment with cluster learning outcomes.

SOPHOMORE INQUIRY ASSESSMENT

QNTS

SENIOR CAPSTONE ASSESSMENT

FOCUS OF THE YEAR

This year the Capstone Office focused on four areas:

- As suggested in the 2013-14 annual assessment report, we worked with an outside diversity consultant to help support student learnings related to the appreciation of human diversity especially in our discipline-specific Capstones.
- We worked extensively with faculty on the Communication (Writing) goal. We framed this work in terms of their participation in the work sample assessment which included multiple meetings to talk about effective assignments to help students articulate their learnings related to communication.
- We continued to work on best practices of teaching community-based learning Capstones via our monthly brownbags.
- We intentionally dedicated .5 of an experienced online faculty member to help support our faculty teaching online Capstone courses.

TOOLS AND METHODS

Summative End-of-Term Course Evaluations

Purpose: The Capstone Student Experience Survey asked about students' experiences in University Studies (UNST) Capstone courses as well as instructor pedagogical approaches and course topics. The survey results provide information to individual faculty about their courses and to the program about the overall student experience in Capstone courses.

Method: Students enrolled in Capstone courses complete paper-based course evaluations in class at the end of their course. During the 2014-2015 academic year, 2862 students completed surveys. We aggregate quantitative responses in order to observe trends over time. Capstone faculty also analyze a random sample of student comments from the course evaluation which supplement the quantitative information.

Small Group Instructional Diagnostic (SGID)

Purpose: Each term, an SGID is conducted in 20% of Capstone courses. These small group feedback sessions are conducted during the middle of the term in order to provide

formative feedback to the Capstone faculty.

Method: An experienced Capstone faculty member goes into a Capstone course taught by a different faculty member and conducts a focus-group like discussion. The SGID covers course content, community work, suggestions for improvement and the UNST learning goals. SGID data were collected in 22 Capstones during the 2014-15 academic year. 14 of those SGIDs were done by a trained facilitator in face to face courses. 8 SGIDs were conducted by the Faculty in Resident for Online Community-Based Learning. The data were analyzed by two Capstone faculty to identify themes across courses. Student comments were organized by category and ranked according to the number of times each category was mentioned.

Capstone Course Portfolio Review

Capstone Course Portfolio Assessment: Communication

Purpose: Capstone course portfolios were developed as a method to assess student learning at the Senior Capstone level of the UNST program. We developed course-based portfolios for Capstones which include syllabi, assignment instructions, and examples of student work produced in the course as a way to capture and display the complexity of student learning in a community-based group-focused course. This year's process built on lessons learned from the approach piloted in AY 2013-14, the dual purposes of which were to engage participating faculty in a summative programmatic assessment that also served as a formative faculty development experience.

Method: Capstone instructors were invited to create course portfolios during the 2014-2015 academic year. 14 course portfolios were constructed for assessment. This year, in order to engage faculty more fully in the assessment process, we held initial meetings where faculty shared with each other the ways in which they incorporate a focus on communication in their Capstone courses. They also discussed the assignments they would be submitting. The artifacts submitted by the faculty included their course syllabus, the assignment they had chosen to illustrate learning around the communication goal, and student work samples from that assignment. These portfolios were uploaded to a secure password-protected site for viewing only by participants on the day of review.

To assess the course portfolios a group consisting of the Capstone Program Director, the Director of Assessment and Upper Division Clusters, and a Capstone faculty member constructed a framework for evaluating communication in these course portfolios. This framework included a list of the types of learning related to communication that occur in Capstone courses and a scoring guide

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that included information on scoring portfolios as inadequate, adequate, or exemplary. On the portfolio review day, ten Capstone faculty members, the Capstone Program Director, and the Director of Assessment and Upper Division Clusters reviewed the portfolios, with each portfolio scored at least twice. During the review process, faculty provided a quantitative score and brief qualitative responses indicating the strength of the portfolio's evidence of student engagement with the communication goal, data which are reviewed only by the Director of Assessment and Upper Division Clusters and the Capstone Program Director (and which, in aggregate form, are commented on elsewhere in this report). Further, faculty reviewers offered their colleagues formative feedback through responses to the questions "What stood out to you as a reviewer of this portfolio, relative to the UNST goal of communication?" and "From your knowledge of this Capstone and your reading of this portfolio, what possibilities do you envision for even greater student engagement with the communication goal in future offerings of this course?"

Following an explanation of the process, faculty performed a calibration on a sample portfolio from a prior year's assessment, discussing their responses to the sample in the large group. After sufficient discussion of the sample work, 3-4 person groups of faculty were formed, with the Capstone Program Director, the Director of Assessment and Upper Division Clusters, and the Faculty Support Specialist each serving as a facilitator of one group's process. In these small groups, each faculty member described their course and contextualized student engagement around the communication goal in the course generally and as evidenced in their selected assignment in particular. After a lunch break, faculty reviewed each of their group member's portfolios, completing both the summative and formative assessment documents identified above. Following the review of portfolios, the small groups reconvened to share the formative responses with each faculty member of the group. A large group discussion of the themes revealed in the feedback, a debrief of the process, and the completion of evaluations on the day's activities rounded out the agenda.

ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

Capstone Student Experience Questionnaire: Quantitative

In 2011-2012, PSU began offering discipline-based Capstone courses which involved developing new models for delivery of Capstone courses. We anticipated and indeed observed

that the student course evaluations might fluctuate as we worked on discovering the best approach for these courses. Last year's course evaluations improved significantly in our discipline-based Capstones, and therefore, when aggregated with all UNST Capstone courses, significant improvement was shown. The data from AY 13-14 demonstrates that Capstone courses overall improved in every area of the Student Learning Experience as well as the Capstone Instruction. During AY 14-15, Capstone courses maintained those high levels of performance.

Capstone Student Experience Questionnaire: Qualitative

Vicki Reitenauer

An analysis of 200 comments responding to the questions "What were your most important learnings from this Capstone?" and "What suggestions do you have to improve this Capstone?" collected through Capstone end-of-term course evaluations revealed themes consistent with past analyses. With regard to the first question about most important learnings, Capstone students continue to report that the experiential, applied, hands-on nature of the course offer them learnings that "can't be taught in a classroom" in ways that lead to increased capacity for communicating and collaborating across difference, appreciation of the diversity of persons within our shared communities, integration of content knowledge (around, for example, water systems, incarceration, and organ donation), and understanding of one's responsibility to engage in pro-civic behavior. Within their comments, many students expressly indicate how they expect these learnings to serve them after graduation. Both as part of a more comprehensive response to this question and in stand-alone comments, a significant number of students identified their instructor and the instructor's qualities and professional example in the Capstone as the most important learning they are taking from the course.

Quite a number of students cited outcomes that had expanded their sense both of self-efficacy and of openness to learning from others. For example, one student reported that the Capstone provided "[t]he ability to stand back and allow who you're serving or working with to teach you, even guide you, in subtle ways when you open yourself up to it." Another said that "This course was extremely difficult and pushed me to my limits. Whenever I ran into something I thought I didn't have the capability of doing, I proved myself wrong." The phrase "making a difference" and "making change" showed up repeatedly in students' comments, including this one: "I learned that I am very capable of making a change in my community. I had been a little resistant to educate myself about current issues (nationally and locally) prior to this class, but feel like this class has given me the tools to understand the issues that directly affect me, and to share my knowledge with others."

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In response to the question asking for suggested changes to improve the course, 85 out of 200 students (42.5%) reported that no improvements were needed to their Capstone. Suggestions for changes often communicated students' desire for more structure, organization, or clarity in the course, as well as both general and specific suggestions for improved communication, particularly in courses that involved a high degree of immersive direct service. A number of students also indicated that they wanted "more:" more contact with community partners, more in-class time (as opposed to online communication), more frequent class meetings (e.g., class meetings twice rather than once a week), longer courses (particularly in the case of condensed summer term offerings), two-term offerings of courses, and even 12 credits committed to the Capstone (instead of 6).

In summary, students report deep richness and meaning in their learnings from their Capstones and often anticipate the ways they expect these learnings to serve them in the future. Slightly more than half also identify possible shifts that could make their Capstones even more effective. Ongoing faculty support efforts, engaged on the individual, group, and programmatic levels, continue to address these areas for improvement in intentional and directed ways.

Small Group Instructional Diagnostic (SGID)

Celine Fitzmaurice & Vicki Reitenauer

During the SGID feedback processes conducted during AY 14-15, Capstone students were asked to report out on four questions: 1) What, in their Capstone, is helping them to learn course content and do their community work; 2) What, in general, could be changed to improve the course; 3) What specific suggestions do they have to bring about those changes; and 4) How the course was impacting their learning around the UNST goals.

In response to the first question, students seemed to gain the most from readings, discussions, the applied nature of the coursework, instructor expertise and support, opportunities for collaborative work, community partner site visits and/or orientations in the classroom, and field trips/interactive learning. Students' suggested improvements to their courses, both general and specific, centered on desiring greater clarity (e.g., a clear syllabus, clear assignment instructions, and clear criteria for grading), more instructor input regarding projects and ongoing

grades, better selection and development of community partners, greater exposure to community partners, and more time in the community.

Students' responses to the question regarding the UNST goals found students most frequently mentioning the appreciation of Diversity of the Human Experience as a central focus and source of learning in their course. The goals of Communication and Social and Ethical Responsibility had an equivalent number of mentions (with the total number slightly fewer than for the diversity goal), with Critical Thinking receiving the fewest mentions.

These data suggest to Capstone faculty support specialists that a focus be put on Critical Thinking in upcoming Capstone workshops and retreats, alongside our continuous efforts to support individual faculty to identify, develop, and utilize their own best practices as Capstone instructors, with these and other sources of student feedback as a guide.

Capstone Course Portfolios Ratings

Capstone Course Portfolio Assessment: Communication

- The course portfolios demonstrated that by and large students are given opportunities to engage in and demonstrate learning related to communication. All of the courses were rated at least adequate and three out of the 13 were rated exemplary.
- Reviewers documented the types of learning related to communication that they observed in the course portfolios. Students had the most opportunity to write reflective essays analyzing new insights and growth developed as a result of working with a team or group and further their meta-cognitive skills, articulating how they deepened their ability to reflect on and name their learnings and the meaning those learnings have for them. Course portfolios provided the least evidence that students were able to practice various forms of professional writing.
- Courses that were rated exemplary provided students with experiences of many modes of communication. Multiple types of writing were represented (e.g., reflective, professional, blogging, experience logs) as well as opportunities for focus on group communication and presentations. These courses also provided a specific focus on communication, prompting students to identify the skills they were building as part of the course.

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Capstone Course Portfolio Process

Faculty evaluations of the course portfolio process reveal that faculty found their time reviewing each other's work and giving and receiving feedback on portfolios to be deeply valuable and meaningful. All participants affirmed that the process felt both supportive of their work as Capstone instructors and they felt inspired by the fresh ideas and approaches that their colleagues shared. In response to the question "What are you taking away from today's session?" one participant wrote "That the work is having an impact;" a second wrote "revitalize this goal in my course;" and a third indicated that they had deepened their "commitment to add support for community partner relationships." Another remarked that the day had "reaffirmed a sense of value in sharing with colleagues," and still another reported "appreciation for assessment process." One participant, in response to the question "How will you use your takeaway(s) in future settings?" wrote "I'm heading to my office right now to note changes to my syllabus and assignments," with a second similarly (and simply) stating "for course revision immediately;" another indicated that that they would "continue to come to gatherings such as this to share, analyze, review, and learn from each other."

Additional questions asked participants what worked best about the day's process and what recommendations they had for shifts to the assessment structure and/or process for future assessments. To the former question, participants consistently reported on the value of the intentional small- and large-group discussion groupings and the varied mix of activities (including the use of a poem to start and end of the day). Several participants, in response to the question asking for suggested changes to the structure and/or process, explicitly requested follow-up sessions to report out on and hear about shifts made to courses as a result of this process. Additionally, participants requested more specificity in the guidelines for portfolio submissions in order to more carefully select assignments and artifacts in the future and suggested the development of an online assessment process so that more faculty could participate.

All of the qualitative feedback submitted by faculty confirmed that participants found the process helpful as practitioners, and felt motivated to spend more time relating to their colleagues to seek both mutual support and inspiration for course improvement. Many desired to see the process expanded to include more colleagues and to extend this process into the future so that they might continue to see and reflect collectively on course improvement.

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The Senior Capstone Learning Experience

Ratings made on a scale of 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree.

Percent of students who agreed or strongly agreed



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Percent of students who agreed or strongly agreed

◆ = highest percent

This course **explored issues of diversity** (such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation).



| 09-10 | 10-11 | 11-12 | 12-13 | 13-14 | 14-15 |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 2652 | 3566 | 2678 | 2267 | 2661 | 2862 |

I believe this course **deepened my understanding of political issues.**



| | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 64.1 | 64.8 | 64.9 | 58.2 | 66.9 | 63.4 |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|

The syllabus clearly described how the **course content connected to the community work.**



| | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 84.8 | 85.4 | 84.5 | 82.2 | 86.8 | 84.3 |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|

I believe this course **deepened my understanding of local social issues.**



| | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 86.6 | 85.0 | 82.0 | 78.3 | 83.7 | 82.4 |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|

I now have a better understanding of how to **make a difference in my community.**



| | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 81.8 | 81.3 | 80.6 | 75.5 | 80.7 | 80.3 |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|

I had the opportunity to apply skills and knowledge gained from my major.



| | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 74.4 | 74.9 | 76.7 | 77.5 | 80.6 | 77.8 |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|

I had the opportunity to engage **with students from different fields of specialization.**



| | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 93.3 | 92.6 | 92.2 | 93.4 | 93.4 | 90.5 |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|

SENIOR CAPSTONE ASSESSMENT

The Senior Capstone Faculty

Ratings made on a scale of 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree.

Percent of students who agreed or strongly agreed

◆ = highest percent



SENIOR CAPSTONE ASSESSMENT

The Senior Capstone Course Portfolio Review

| Portfolio Rating | Number of Portfolios |
|---|----------------------|
| Inadequate (the portfolio did not show that the course provided students with clear opportunities to demonstrate their learning related to ethics and social responsibility) | 0 |
| Adequate (the portfolio showed that the course provided opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning related to ethics and social responsibility) | 10 |
| Exemplary (the course syllabi, assignments, and activities consistently and clearly provided opportunities for students to demonstrate learning related to ethics and social responsibility. This course is an example for others) | 3 |

| Portfolio element | Number exemplary |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| Syllabus | 4 |
| Assignment instructions | 1 |
| Student work samples | 3 |

REFLECTION

Overall the Capstone Office was pleased that the Capstone courses maintained the very strong quantitative scores that were achieved in 2013-14 where statistically significant improvement was documented in 28 items regarding teaching and learning in Capstones. It is impressive that the students report continued strong growth regarding the UNST goals, meaningful engagement in the community, and a deep sense that the community work improves their understanding of the course content. It was satisfying to see that zero of our Capstone courses that were assessed for the Communication (Writing) goal were inadequate and that 10 were adequate and 3 were exemplary.

ACTION STEPS

The Capstone Office will continue to work with an external diversity consultant to further support faculty's capacity to improve our students' experience reflecting on diversity issues related to the course content and community work in discipline-specific Capstones. The Capstone Office will also continue to nurture a strong relationship with the Office of Academic Innovation to support a Faculty in Residence for Online Community-Based Learning. That position will further our efforts to improve the student experience and learning in online Capstone courses.

The Capstone Program has been lauded nationally for its comprehensive approach to assessment including both our formative and our summative practices. This approach does indeed give our program the information needed to document student learning and employ effective faculty development for individual and programmatic improvement.

The primary expansion of assessment practices suggested for the 2015-16 academic year is a qualitative study involving our online Capstone students to better understand their experiences in Capstones. Now that we engage over 300 students per year in online courses, it is imperative that we better understand how they experience Capstones, what are their most important learnings, and document how we can improve those innovative courses.

The primary modification to our existing practices related to Capstone course portfolio process action steps where we intend to:

- Build in follow-up sessions to report out on and hear about shifts made to courses as a result of this process.
- Provide participants more details and specificity in the guidelines for portfolio submissions so that they might more carefully select assignments and artifacts in the future.

SENIOR CAPSTONE ASSESSMENT

CAPSTONE

WRITING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT

FOCUS FOR THE YEAR

- Develop, pilot, and apply a new holistic written communication rubric for assessment of student work and portfolios.
- Pilot an assessment of student work from Sophomore Inquiry (SINQ) courses using the new written communication rubric.
- Encourage cluster-level assessment of written communication through review of student work, assignments, and syllabi.
- Develop ways to support multilingual students in University Studies (UNST), including international students, students with immigrant and refugee backgrounds, and Generation 1.5 students.

TOOLS AND METHODS

UNST Writing Rubric Pilot

Purpose: Two years ago, the UNST Writing Coordinator led a group of faculty in clarifying learning outcomes for writing in Freshman Inquiry (FRINQ) and SINQ courses. Last year, a group of faculty developed an analytic rubric for classroom use to assess the learning outcomes. This year, we worked to translate the analytic rubric into a holistic rubric for program assessment purposes. Before using the rubric as part of our annual ePortfolio review process, we piloted it in order to get feedback about its use with our students' work.

Method: A group of seven faculty (from a variety of disciplines and that teach at multiple levels of the UNST program) and one UNST graduate mentor met for three hours and rated portfolios using the new holistic rubric. The focus of the day was feedback and discussion of any aspects of the rubric that were unclear.

FRINQ ePortfolio and SINQ Paper Review

Purpose: The FRINQ ePortfolio and SINQ Paper Review process scored student work against a newly developed writing rubric. The results provide information to faculty teams and the program more generally about student writing in FRINQ and SINQ. At the SINQ level, we were piloting a student work sample collection process because this has not been a routine practice at the SINQ level.

Method: As part of FRINQ courses, students develop ePortfolios representing their work and reflection relating to

the four UNST goals. During spring 2015, students were asked for permission to evaluate their ePortfolios as part of program assessment for UNST. 257 student portfolios were randomly selected for review. This year, the portfolio review process focused on the Communication (Writing) goal, which was assessed using a newly developed 6-point writing rubric. Inter-rater agreement for the rubric was 81.3%.

During winter and spring terms of 2015, 142 student writing samples were collected from 35 SINQ faculty. 13 out of 15 SINQ themes were represented in this sample, but it is a smaller sample than we would like to collect in the future. Also, there was variety in the sampling methods across courses. Some faculty provided a random sample of student work others provided a sample of high, medium, and low student work.

SINQ End-of-Term Survey

Purpose: As part of the end of term survey, students were asked to report on the types of writing they produced in the course along with the kinds of writing support they received. The results provide information to individual faculty about their course and to the program about students' overall writing experience in SINQ.

Method: During the final three weeks of each term during the 2014-2015 academic year, SINQ students completed the End-of-Term Survey. This online survey was administered during mentor sessions. 2905 students responded to the survey.

IELP Partnership and Multilingual FRINQ Lab Course

Purpose: During spring 2014, the Intensive English Language Program (IELP) and UNST began collaborating on a new approach to help support multilingual students enrolled in FRINQ courses and provide increased professional development for UNST faculty. "Multilingual" describes someone who knows more than one language and grew up mainly using a language other than English, and it encompasses international students, immigrants, refugees, and Generation 1.5 students. This term embraces the view that these students' linguistic backgrounds and skills are assets to their own learning as well as that of their classmates. Many FRINQ faculty welcome the unique perspectives multilingual students bring to the learning experience, but they also feel ill-equipped to meet the unique needs that many of these students have when beginning their college studies. The situation can be especially challenging when classes have high percentages of this population. In the fall 2011 and 2012 Prior Learning Survey, 35% of FRINQ students

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reported speaking a language other than English in their homes, but FRINQ classes can have upwards of 50% or more multilingual students. Even when the percentage of multilingual students in a FRINQ course is low, instructors and students can find themselves in need of focused and timely support.

Method: The IELP and UNST have developed a multifaceted program that 1) supports multilingual FRINQ students through a 2-credit bridge course titled Multilingual FRINQ Lab and 2) provides professional development for FRINQ/UNST faculty and mentors. The 2-credit course was piloted over two terms (winter and spring of 2015). Both the class and professional development—which included both workshops and one-on-one faculty support—were led by an IELP instructor in consultation with the UNST Writing Coordinator.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

UNST Writing Rubric Pilot

The pilot helped us to clarify the language of the rubric and determine how well it worked as a tool for assessment. It also provided us with some ideas for what aspects of the rubric might call for further elaboration or discussion as we prepared to introduce the new rubric to faculty in the June portfolio review. For example, we realized that we would need to discuss with faculty how they might look for evidence of process and what elements of the student work might serve as evidence for an understanding of the writing process. Overall, faculty and the mentor that participated in the pilot found the rubric clear and easier to use than UNST's previous rubric, and suggestions for changes focused primarily on clarifying words or phrases.

FRINQ ePortfolio and SINQ Paper Review

FRINQ: 79% of FRINQ students met program expectations for writing performance. The newly revised 6-point writing rubric was developed such that a 4 represents program expectations for student writing at the sophomore level. First-year students are expected to perform at a level 3. 38% (183) of FRINQ ePortfolios were rated at a level 3 or 3.5. 35% (73) were rated a 4 or 4.5 and 6% (18) were rated at 5 or 5.5. The overall mean score for FRINQ ePortfolios was 3.38. Across the 10 FRINQ themes from which student portfolios were sampled, average writing rubric scores ranged from 3.0 to 3.73.

SINQ: With a 4 representing expectations for writing at a sophomore level, 39% of SINQ student writing samples

reached that level. The mean score for SINQ student writing samples was 3.0. We found evidence of strong writing across SINQ themes and across genres (e.g., brochures, literary analysis, research papers), but overall the writing was not as strong as we expected. We believe that there were problems with our sampling methodology so we cannot rely on this as a representative sample of student writing from across all SINQs. However, the results do inform our understanding of writing at the sophomore level of UNST and point out that we need to focus on writing instruction in the next year.

SINQ End-of-Term Survey

When students were asked about the types of writing they produced in their SINQ courses, they most frequently reported producing papers requiring multiple sources, reading responses, reflections, and research papers. Few students reported producing blog posts, letters, or web entries. Compared with student responses to the same questions from 2012, there was a marked increase in students reporting that they wrote D2L discussion posts as part of the writing produced in their SINQ courses.

Support for student writing in SINQ may take many forms and can occur in both main and mentor sessions of the course. The most frequent activities in main session were help with understanding the assignment and critical reading of course materials. The most frequently occurring activity in mentor session was reviewing drafts of student writing. For most writing support activities, the mentors played a key role.

IELP Partnership Course

As a pilot program, the IELP partnership and Multilingual FRINQ Lab courses were successful, and it was determined that they should be continued in the 2015-16 academic year. Enrollment in the 2-credit class was capped at 16; 9 students enrolled in Winter 2015 and 14 enrolled in Spring 2015 with some students continuing from winter term. Students' evaluations indicated that the course was extremely beneficial, contributing to both a better understanding of faculty expectations and multilingual students' sense of connectivity to the university.

Several faculty and mentors benefited from both the one-on-one assistance from the IELP faculty as well as organized workshops. All mentors were required to attend a session at fall mentor training that included discussion of and training in supporting multilingual students. Attendance at faculty workshops, however, was disappointing. Yet those that did attend provided positive feedback on the experience and indicated that they gained new knowledge and ideas.

WRITING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT

DATA

FRINQ ePortfolio and SINQ Paper Review

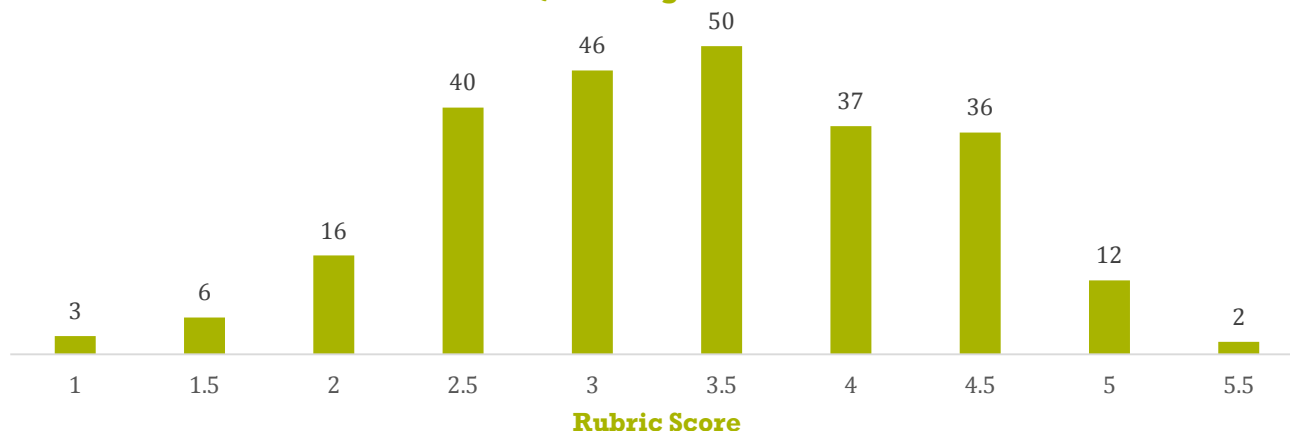
FRINQ:

Mean writing rubric score: 3.37.

Percent of portfolios scoring above 3: 55.

Percent of portfolios scoring above 2: 89.9.

2015 FRINQ Writing Rubric Scores



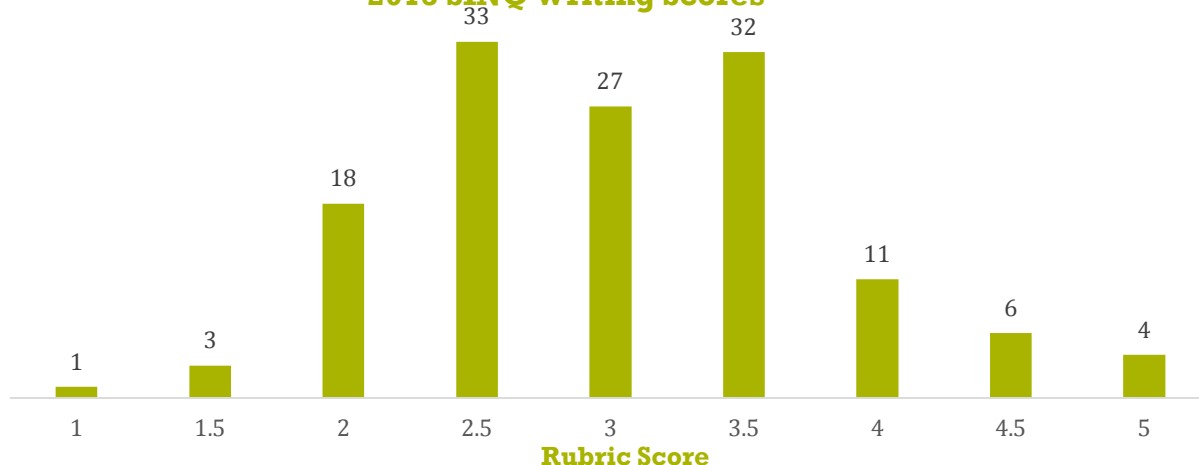
SINQ:

Mean writing rubric score: 3.0.

Percent of portfolios scoring above 3: 39.2.

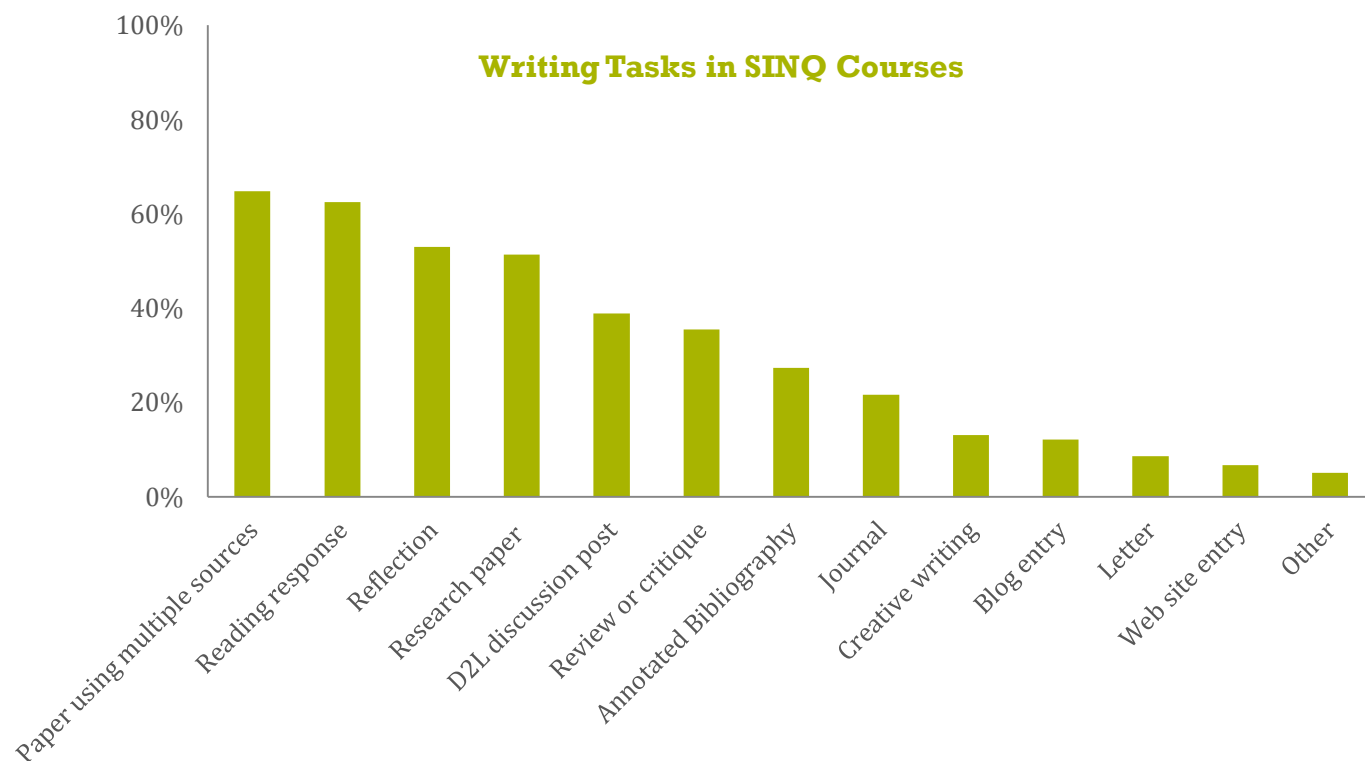
Percent of portfolios scoring above 2: 83.7.

2015 SINQ Writing Scores

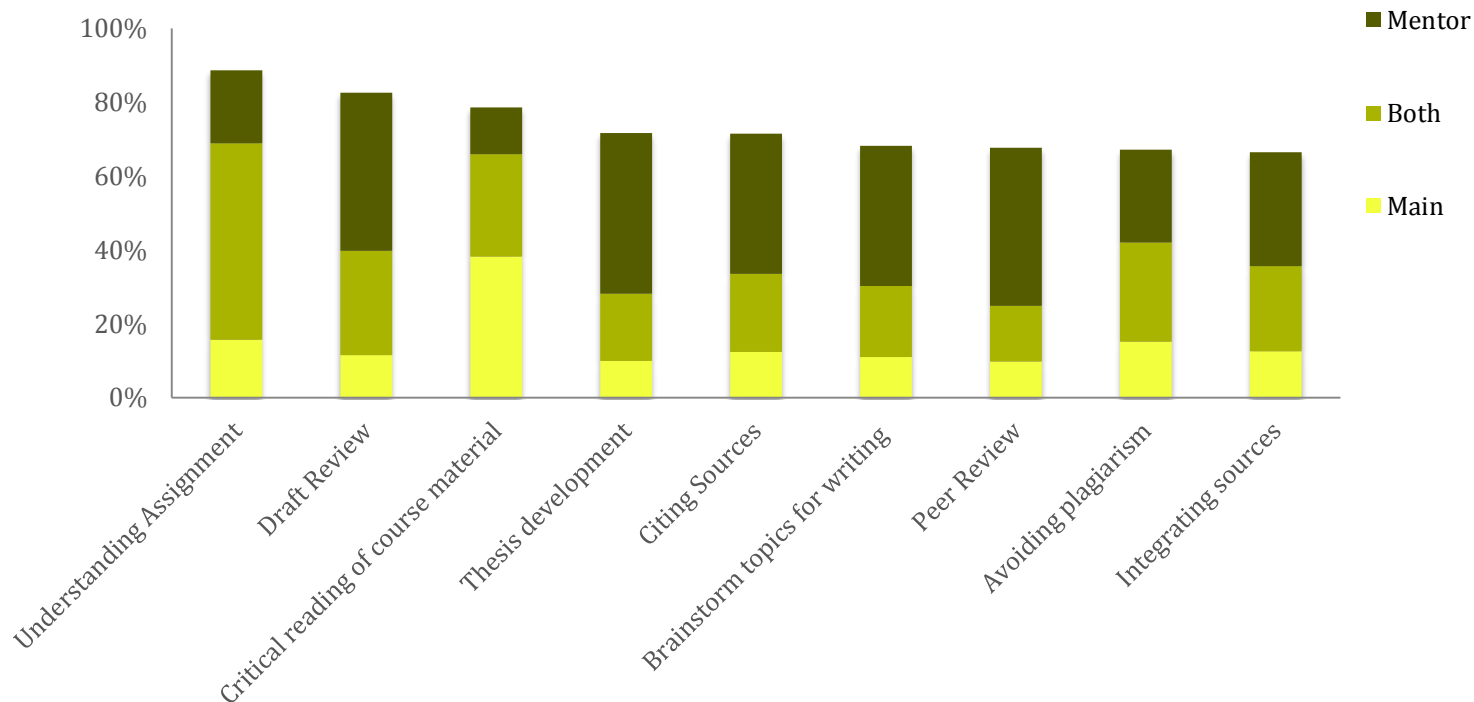


WRITING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT

SINQ End-of-Term Survey



Writing Support in SINQ Courses



WRITING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT

REFLECTION

About the Results

Several factors indicate many improvements in both our teaching and assessment of writing in UNST. We see from the feedback faculty and mentors provided that the new written communication rubric allows us to assess writing more accurately and with a clearer sense of the writing outcomes. Several faculty and mentors who had used the previous rubric noted that the new one was both easier to use and that they felt more confident in their assessment. Furthermore, due to its emphasis on the importance of writing for multiple audiences and in multiple genres, the new rubric allowed us to better assess writing from a variety of genres, and produced in a variety of media and/or formats (blogs, brochures, etc.). The new rubric also led to important conversations amongst faculty about the importance of students' understanding of audience and genre, as well as discussions about writing conventions. Increasing faculty and mentor conversations around writing is an essential goal of UNST's assessment program as it offers an opportunity to share pedagogies, approaches, and assignments.

The results of the FRINQ ePortfolio assessment indicate that we are moving towards reaching our goals for first-year writing. However, we need to continue to emphasize the importance of written communication in FRINQ and strive towards more consistently strong student writing. We also want to assure that our ePortfolios accurately reflect both student work and their reflections on their work, and we hope that the new ePortfolio format will help us improve in this area.

As noted above, the assessment of SINQ papers was conducted as a pilot in the 2014-15 academic year, and there was variance in terms of the kind of work faculty gave us. Though the sample was significant for a pilot, it was not a broad enough sample from which to develop a true random sample. Despite these questions of methodology, the results indicate that we need to continue to work on improving writing instruction and writing support in SINQ. Unlike FRINQ, SINQ courses are limited to one ten-week term, which can make teaching writing, and encouraging sustained process-oriented writing habits in students, more challenging. Furthermore, students in SINQ courses have a variety of experiences with writing, as many SINQ students transferred from other institutions.

Our work supporting multilingual students indicate that the Multilingual FRINQ Lab course provides a strong model for

supporting students who may need additional assistance with reading and writing. In order to sustain strong enrollment in that course, we need to increase our work with both faculty and advisors across the PSU campus to publicize the course. It is also important that we find ways to increase attendance at faculty development workshops.

About the Assessment Process

Our assessment provides a strong overview of writing in UNST, and gives us a sense of where we might continue to improve. In terms of the assessment of SINQ papers, we can improve on the number of papers we gather as well as develop more consistency in terms of the types of papers (e.g. high, medium, and low grades) and we develop better systems and methodologies. Furthermore, SINQ faculty and Cluster Coordinators now have a better sense of the purpose of the assessment and, because of this, can further assist us with gathering student work.

The questions we ask of students in the End-of-Year Survey provide us with a strong overall sense of the kinds of activities and assignments in SINQ courses, and we can see some changes over time that may be a result of increased awareness of good practice and/or new technology (e.g. increased reviews of students drafts and increased use of online discussion formats). At the same time, we also know that students may have different understandings of what these writing activities involve or how they are classified. More discussion in main and mentor session of why these activities are important and how they connect to the writing process could lead to better understanding among students.

It would be helpful to have more specific information about the types of writing assigned across the UNST program. Through our assessment and professional development efforts we have been able to gather more assignments from instructors, and it would be helpful to find more ways to gather, assess, and share a variety of assignments.

ACTION STEPS

Action Steps Informed by Data:

- Continue to work with Cluster Coordinators to determine how to support writing within their themes.
- Work with faculty development team and with the incoming Director of University Studies to increase faculty involvement in faculty development.

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- Continue to increase faculty awareness of the new UNST rubric for written communication and, through both faculty development workshops and sharing resources, demonstrate ways to apply the ideas in the rubric.
- Offer focused workshops for SINO faculty to help them develop assignments and clear outcomes for writing in their themes.
- Continue to collaborate with PSU's IELP to support multilingual students.

Next Steps for Assessment:

- Continue to assess both FRINQ ePortfolios and SINO papers using the new written communication rubric and update aspects of the rubric that call for clarification.
- Continue to gather student work from SINO courses and work with clusters to find ways to use the data for their own development.

Questions to Address:

- What are the varieties of writing used in both FRINQ and SINO and what do they tell us about the possibilities for writing instruction in UNST?
- Are the types of writing assigned meeting current student needs, and do they reflect the goals of UNST?
- How can we provide more adequate support for students who need additional assistance with both reading and writing?

ONLINE OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT

Online SINQs and Capstones Fall 2011 to Spring 2014

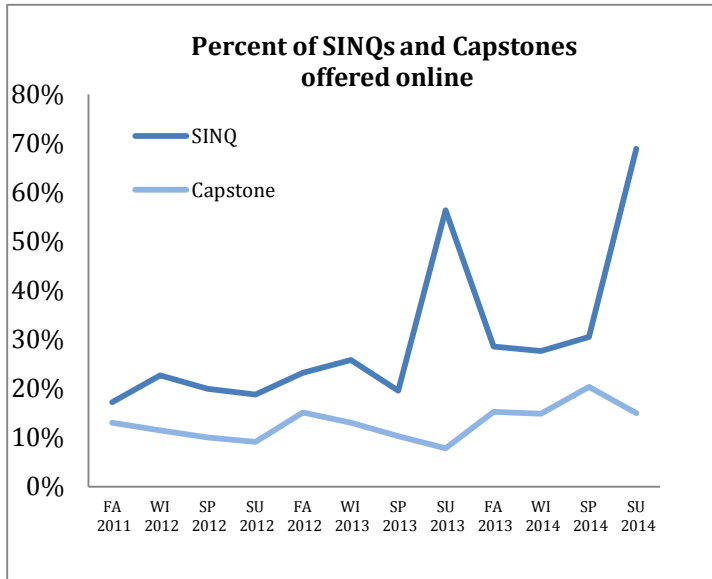
by Meredith Michaud and Rowanna Carpenter

This is a summary of a longer research report on online student experiences in SINQ and Capstone courses. [See the full report here.](#)

Over the last several years, there has been an investment in offering more SINQ and Capstone classes online. This report takes a comprehensive look at online students enrolled in both SINQ and Capstone courses over three full academic years: 2011-2012; 2012-2013; and 2013-14.

The goal of this report is to examine student experience and outcomes in online classes. Data is from PSU's data warehouse and SINQ and Capstone end-of-term course evaluation responses. This research is supported by the Provost Challenge (details at <http://www.pdx.edu/oai/provosts-challenge-projects-63>).

Overall, the percent of online SINQs and Capstones showed a pattern of growth from Fall 2011 to Spring 2014.



ONLINE STUDENT PROFILES

From Fall 2011 to Spring 2014, 8697 students took at least one SINQ.

Online SINQ Student Profile

Gender: 57.6% of online SINQ students identified as female, 41.6% as male, and 0.8% as unknown or other genders.

Ethnicity: 6.6% identified as International, 10% as Hispanic/Latino, 5.7% as Multiple Race/Ethnicity, 0.9% as American Indian or Alaskan Native, 7.8% as Asian, 3.8% as Black or African American, 0.8% as Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, 60.9% as White, and 3.6% of students did not respond.

Residency Status: 84.1% were Oregon residents.

Age: 27% were 19 years or younger, 45.3% were between 20 and 24, 13.3% were between 25 and 29, and 14.4% were 30 years or older.

Class level: 3.4% Freshman, 47.4% Sophomore, 32.2% Junior, 17% Senior, (0.1% Non-Admitted, 0.1% Post-Bac).

Transfer: 53.2% transferred from another institution.

Online Capstone Student Profile

From Fall 2011 to Spring 2014, 9724 students took at least one Capstone class.

Gender: 63.6% of online Capstone students identified as female, 36% as male, and 0.7% as unknown or other genders.

Ethnicity: 2.8% identified as International, 8.3% as Hispanic/Latino, 5.2% as Multiple Race/Ethnicity, 1.4% as American Indian or Alaskan Native, 4.8% as Asian, 3.4% as Black or African American, 0.8% as Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, 71% as White, and 2.3% of students did not respond.

Residency Status: 79% were Oregon residents.

Age: 0.4% were 19 years or younger, 30.8% were between 20 and 24, 27.9% were between 25 and 29, and 40.9% were 30 years or older.

Class level: 0% Freshman, 0% Sophomore, 3.9% Junior, 95.8% Senior, (0.1% Non-Admitted, 0.1% Post-Bac, 0.1% Graduate).

Transfer: 84.2% were transfer students.

For a comparison of online students with the overall SINQ and Capstone student population, see the full report.

ONLINE OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT

DFWXI RATES FOR SINQ AND CAPSTONE

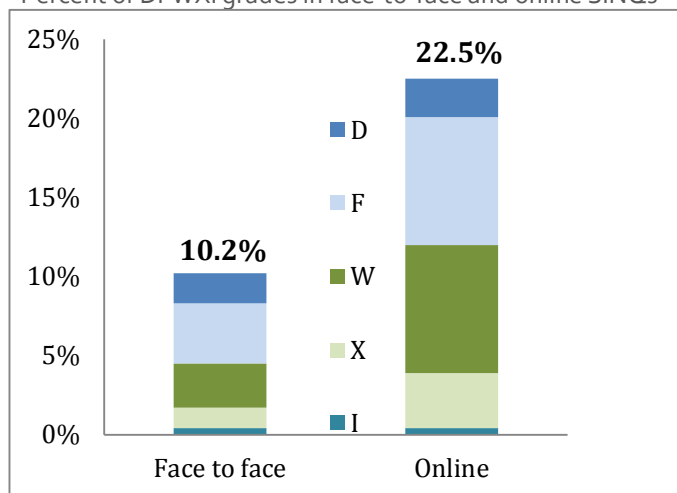
Beyond questions of which students enroll in online courses, we wanted to investigate student performance in those courses. One way to do that is to compare the grade distributions in online and face-to-face courses.

SINQ

Using data from PSU's data warehouse, we looked at student grades in 434 face-to-face SINQs and 151 online SINQs from Fall 2011 to Spring 2014. The figure and chart below show the percent of Ds, Fs, Ws, Xs, and Is in face-to-face classes and online classes.

The combined DFWXI rate for face-to-face classes was 10.2%, while the combined DFWXI rate for online classes was 22.5%.

Percent of DFWXI grades in face-to-face and online SINQs



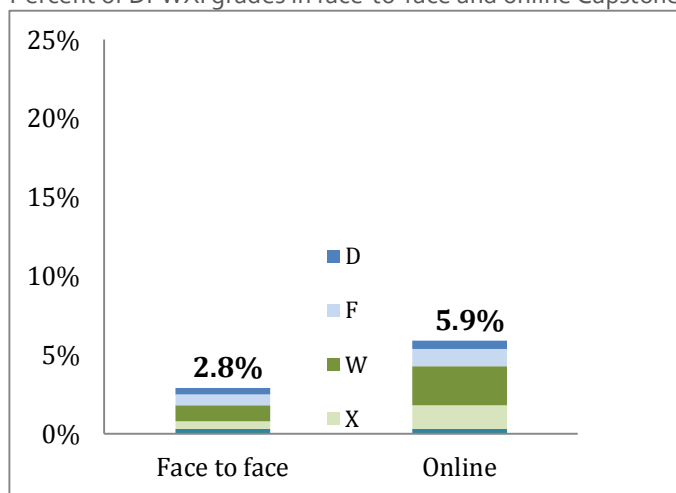
| | Face-to-face | Online |
|----|--------------|--------|
| D | 1.9% | 2.4% |
| F* | 3.8% | 8.1% |
| W* | 2.8% | 8.1% |
| X* | 1.3% | 3.5% |
| I | 0.4% | 0.4% |

Capstone

Using data from PSU's data warehouse, we also looked at student grades in 628 face-to-face Capstones and 92 online Capstones from Fall 2011 to Spring 2014. The figure and chart below show the percent of Ds, Fs, Ws, Xs, and Is in face-to-face classes and online classes.

The combined DFWXI rate for face-to-face classes was 2.8%, while the combined DFWXI rate for online classes was 5.9%.

Percent of DFWXI grades in face-to-face and online Capstones



| | Face-to-face | Online |
|----|--------------|--------|
| D | 0.4% | 0.5% |
| F | 0.7% | 1.1% |
| W* | 1% | 2.5% |
| X* | 0.5% | 1.5% |
| I | 0.3% | 0.3% |

See the full report which includes an examination of SINQ, Capstone and Mentor course evaluations.

*Difference between face to face and online classes is significant at the 0.05 level ($p < 0.05$).

ONLINE OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT

REFLECTION

After increasing emphasis and investment in online delivery over the last several years, this research was an important step toward assuring that students who enroll in online courses are learning and succeeding. After writing the full report, UNST convened a group of online faculty for a discussion about the results and next steps. The meeting was well attended and the conversation was rich.

Regarding online courses, faculty were concerned about the higher DWFXI rates, students struggling to keep up, and students feeling a lower sense of community among classmates (revealed in course evaluations). We focused on identifying students who will not be successful in online courses early, while there is still time to drop a class and receive a refund. The discussion included making expectations very clear so students know that in UNST online courses they will be required to check in multiple times a week, possibly work in groups, and perform a range of classroom activities, not just take exams. This discussion was balanced with a concern for maintaining attention to the access that online courses provide, particularly at the Capstone level. Students who are parents, have moved out of the region, or have other difficulty getting to campus are served by these courses and may need support to complete them. That doesn't mean we should weed them out up front.

The discussion of community in online courses was also important. Not all faculty felt that students are seeking community when they take courses online. Others felt that community is important to the students' learning experience. Regardless, the discussion brought out many ideas about connecting to students including using synchronous sessions, and video and audio to provide more personalization and connection in the online environment.

Overall, we agree that there is room for improvement in our online courses and we generated some ideas and action steps to address student success in our online courses.

ACTION STEPS

Faculty:

- Inject the human element into online courses through video, audio, and synchronous meetings. Several faculty said they would experiment with more ways to reach out to students.
- Make use of the UNST course home page and template.

UNST Program:

- Create an online training module for students – this will take place during Fall 2015 term.
- Explore possibility and implications of having students dropped automatically if they haven't logged into their class by the end of the first week.
- Examine student expectations and reasons for taking online classes.

Mentors:

- Have online mentors call students – we are piloting a process this summer that includes mentor outreach to students enrolled in online SINQ courses.
- Contribute best practices for online mentoring.
- Develop a training module for online mentors. This will be complete summer term.

ONLINE OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT

SPECIAL

MAPS OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT

reTHINKING Access to Student Support with the MAPS Widget

by Neera Malhotra, Erika Schnatz, and Dana Lundell

This is a summary of a longer research report on student support via the “Ask-a-MAPS Mentor” widget. [See the full report here.](#)

The Provost’s Challenge project #113, reTHINKING Access to Student Support with the MAPS Widget, explored the online presence of UNST peer mentor MAPS support team. The grant was used to create an online widget as a tool to access MAPS team by fellow mentors and students (SINQ and FRINQ) when in need. The project demonstrates that the widget tool not only facilitates instant access of the team’s support and resources, but it also is seen as a tool to document concerns that affect student retention within the university.

OVERVIEW OF RESULTS

The analysis of the data downloaded from the widget in AY 2014–15, along with in-person formal interviews of MAPS team members, revealed that the online widget has increased the access for UNST students to navigate through campus resources and human support at PSU. The project facilitated ubiquitous access to support for users through the Ask-a-MAPS Mentor online widget.

These are the overall results of this project:

1. The data revealed several themes illustrating concrete key student concerns and support needs they have at PSU.
2. The data shows that the widget not only supports instant access to resources via the MAPS mentor team, but it also helps in documenting the needs of the users, which in turn facilitates the sustainability of the project.
3. Even though the “Ask-a-MAPS Mentor” tool was originally conceived as a way to initiate online exchanges between the MAPS team and the tool’s users, in practice the widget has also been used in combination with informal meetings and telephone conversations to streamline access to campus resources.
4. The widget had an impact on the way MAPS team members viewed their work with the addition of the tool, calling it a “go-to button” for the team.

5. The interview conversations also revealed that most users, which are UNST students, prefer to reach out for help in person instead of using the widget, and they added that it depends upon the urgency of the situation and also the kind of situation one is facing.
6. As a whole the use of widget facilitates MAPS work to ensure holistic access to the campus resources and promote credible work by mentors by sustaining an online presence to facilitate academic enculturation and self-validation.

FINDINGS

The table below presents the summary of data collection through the online widget, a button in students’ UNST online course shells that generates a web form inviting them to outline their concerns (via a checklist or in an open-ended comment box) that the MAPS team might help them address.

The table shows that most queries during AY 2014–15 focused on academic concerns. These concerns were further expressed as needs related to writing resources, research help, and access to content material. The second most common concern during the three terms was the category of “health and safety.” This was defined as concerns related to physical health, sexual assault, and mental health. The third most common concern during the academic year was interactions with faculty, staff, and others. This concern included communication and interactions with students and faculty, as well as interactions with the departments to access resources to facilitate holistic support for the students. Finally, another concern noted was “finance,” which included needs related to financial aid and understanding of campus resources to help pay education-related expenses.

| | Fall 2014 | Winter 2015 | Spring 2015 |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|--|--|
| Total Number of Concerns | 14 SINQ: 7 FRINQ: 6 | 8 SINQ: 5 FRINQ: 3 | 5 SINQ: 2 FRINQ: 3 |
| Primary Concern I | Academics | Academics | Academics |
| Primary Concern II | Health & Safety | Interaction with Faculty, Staff & Others | Health & Safety |
| Primary Concern III | Finance | Health & Safety | Interaction with Faculty, Staff & Others |

MAPS OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT

Sustainability, Reflection, and Actions

One goal of the reTHINK Project was to identify a means for sustaining the new work that the introduction of the online widget brought to the UNST mentor program. The MAPS team previously gathered responses in these ways: 1) email to a listserv hosted by the team, 2) email directly to one or more of the MAPS members, 3) a phone call to a team member, or 4) a conversation or meeting in-person.

The implementation, introduction, and piloting of the MAPS widget in AY 2014–15 shifted the team's work by offering and encouraging another way to contact team members both for students and mentors. With this new pathway for access, it offered the MAPS team and reTHINK Project team researchers to consider how the work might change in the future based on the data in this report.

Reflection and Actions

The project tracked formally that 27 people used the widget directly during the widget's pilot year. The goal for future years is to increase the direct use of the widget to track and document all contact by mentors and students with the MAPS team. In addition to the widget use and based on past means for accessing the MAPS team, which were still encouraged in the pilot year of the tool (in case the tool would not work or be inaccessible for some reason), many people also accessed the MAPS team via email, in-person communication, and other informal ways to meet such as informal coffee meet-ups and informal chats.

During interviews with the MAPS team members or mentors who used the widget, every participant was asked to provide guidelines to ensure sustainability of the widget. Following are the quotes pulled out from the interview conversations:

- "...having the widget there in your course shell gives students the option to go directly to give sources and with anonymity..."
- "...with this team behind me, this team [she stressed], I can handle any situation; the widget added that access for me to reach MAPS team whenever I needed them."

- "Even though we can post a link etc., just having the widget is very streamlined. The reason why it's useful is it's 'presence.' It symbolizes the location, a defined space where issues can be recorded. It's sort of preventive, so that when the students know that it's there, the moment something comes up, they know that it's there. It takes a lot for a student to come to even the mentor, they still wait for a long time to come forward with the issues, it 'normalizes' the issues that they might need assistance. I don't know any student who has gone through college who didn't need any such support. I think that's true for all types of students."
- "I think it counts to have that presence and carrying it forward. I think, if we can have a direct tab that connects to our emails, it would be more convenient, instead of just getting an intimation that someone filled the web form."
- "...it's a go-to button," another mentor adds, "I know if I reach them via [the] widget, I will get multiple answers, as everyone is awesome. This gives me multiple perspectives on my situation. Also, I know that at the end of that email dialogue, I can always meet them in-person or may be talk to them over the phone."

Based on the feedback of the mentors and the themes and sub-themes gathered from the widget's web forms, future reflection will be ongoing in the form of data reports and year-end interviews with mentors and MAPS team members.

CONCLUSION

Finally, the work of reTHINK will continue utilizing the widget and provide instructions and training to the incoming AY 2015–16 MAPS mentors to use the widget and generate data and reports. The development of the reTHINK widget provides a centralized and highly trackable means for mentors and students to access the high-impact resources of the PSU campus.